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ABSTRACT

Prompted by current concern with the dearth of empirical research on the role of humor in communication, the author prepared this bibliography to aid future researchers in the field. Although the entries span the years from 1939 through December 1972, the predominant number of publications represent the years 1966-1972. The fifty-four entries contained in the bibliography were selected on the dual basis of form and content--most of the studies are experimental in design and report original research on humor as communication. Each entry is accompanied by a brief annotation identifying the essence of the study in order to indicate its usefulness to the prospective researcher. (LG)

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AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF LAUGHTER-PROVOKING STIMULI AS COMMUNICATION

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At the Speech Communication Association's annual convention in Chicago during December, 1972, one "Dimension Program" was devoted to "The Role of Humor in Communication" (See SCA Abstracts, 1972, 9-11). On that program two nationally-prominent speech professors, Dr. Kenneth E. Andersen of the University of Illinois and Dr. Raymond G. Smith of the University of Indiana, each argued two identical points: each claimed that very little empirical research on the role of humor in communication had been done, and each argued that a great deal more such research ought to be undertaken in the future. In order to aid future researchers in the field of humor as communication, the present bibliography has been prepared.

In selecting the items for inclusion in the bibliography, emphasis has been placed upon two criteria, both inherent in the title, above. First of all, only empirical studies are included. With very few exceptions, the items are reports of original research reporting quantitative data; most of these are experimental studies. The few non-quantitative studies included are (with possibly one exception) based upon rigorous observations of behavior made by trained investigators.

The second criterion limiting the inclusion of items in this bibliography was whether a study deals with humor as communication. The critical question involved here is, "Does this study concern itself with some communicative

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effect in auditors as a result of laughter-provoking stimuli?" For instance, in an experimental study the humorous stimuli is typically the independent variable manipulated, whereas the communicative effect in auditors (attitude change, information retention, reaction to the speaker, etc.) is typically the dependent variable measured. Excluded from this bibliography is the large and growing number of studies concerning the relationship of various psychological variables to such concepts as humor appreciation, sense of humor, and ability to create humor. For studies in this more general area, the interested reader is directed to two other bibliographies. One is: Yvonne Treadwell, "Bibliography of Empirical Studies of Wit and Humor ," Psychological Reports, 20 (1967), 1079-83; a later, more comprehensive (and annotated) bibliography is by Jeffrey H. Goldstein and Paul E. McGhee in the book they have edited, The Psychology of Humor (New York: Academic Press, 1972).

In the interests of space and brevity, the annotation of each item below is usually held to a single phrase, clause, or sentence. However, it is hoped that this brief annotation will identify the essential nature of the study sufficiently to indicate whether it would be useful to the prospective researcher.

When studies have appeared in more than one form (such as a convention paper and an article or dissertation, for instance), this information is noted. In the case of SCA convention papers, the source of its published SCA Abstracts is detailed. Also, where convention papers are known to have existed in dittoed or mimeographed form, this information is supplied; copies may be thus available from the authors. At least some of these convention papers are available through the ERIC system.

Annis, A.D., "The Relative Effectiveness of Cartoons and Editorials as Propaganda Media," Psychological Bulletin, 36 (1939), 628.

A brief one-paragraph report asserting that a study showed that editorials were more effective than were editorial cartoons.

Asher, R. and S. Sargent, "Shifts in Attitude Caused by Cartoon Caricatures," Journal of General Psychology, 24 (1941), 451-5.

Study shows changes in attitude/perception of some concepts after exposure to satirical caricatures of those concepts.

Berlo, David K. and Hideya Kumata, "The Investigator: The Impact of a Satirical Radio Drama," Journalism Quarterly, 33 (1956), 287-98.

A satirical radio drama changed attitudes toward congressional investigations but not the satirized Joseph McCarthy, Senator from Wisconsin.

Brandes, Paul D., "The Persuasiveness of Varying Types of Humor," Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, December, 1970, New Orleans. In SCA Abstracts, 1970, pp. 12-13.

A speech entitled, "What Every Yale Freshman Should Know" was not enhanced in persuasiveness by adding either jokes, puns, or "Sarcastic humor."

Brinkman, Del, "Do Editorial Cartoons and Editorials Change Opinions?" Journalism Quarterly, 45 (Winter, 1968), 724-6.

Results indicate editorials are more persuasive, but that a cartoon can enhance editorial persuasiveness when presented with the editorial and makes the same point.

Burns, Thomas A., "A Joke and Its Tellers: A Study of the Functional Variations of a Folklore Item at the Psychological Level," Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1972

Concludes that: "Tellers were found to view the content of the joke quite differently, to be involved in different aspects of the joke's content, to gain from the joke quite different benefits, and to gain these benefits at different levels." (Quote is from his abstract.)

Carl, LeRoy M., "Editorial Cartoons Fail to Reach Many Readers," Journalism Quarterly, 45 (Summer, 1968), 533-5.

Found that up to 70% of attempts to state rhetorical point artists intended in editorial cartoons were incorrect.

Cooper, Eunice and Marie Jahoda, "The Evasion of Propaganda; How Prejudiced People Respond to Anti-Prejudice Propaganda," Journal of Psychology, 23 (1947), 15-25.

Summarizes a series of studies showing that prejudiced persons react to anti-prejudice cartoons and other material with a variety of defense mechanisms which prevents perception of anti-prejudice thesis of message.

Coser, Rose L., "Laughter Among Colleagues: A Study of the Social Functions of Humor Among the Staff of a Mental Hospital," Psychiatry, 23 (1960) 81-95.

Analytical study of humor used in 20 hospital staff meetings concludes, in part, that "Humor serves to reduce the social distance between persons occupying different positions in the social structure . . . . to relax the rigidity of the social structure without, however, upsetting it."

_____, "Some Social Functions of Laughter: A Study of Humor in a Hospital Setting," Human Relations, 12 (1959), 171-82.

Non-quantitative study which concludes, in part, " . . . humor allows the [patients] ... to reinterpret their experiences, to entertain, reassure, and communicate; to convey their interest in one another, to pull the group together. . . ."

Davis, Jay M. and Amerigo Farina, "Humor Appreciation as Social Communication," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 15 (1970), 175-8.

Male subjects' ratings of sexually-oriented cartoons were higher when they were communicating their ratings directly to a sexually attractive female experimenter; males' use of these ratings to show sexual interest in female experimenter is given as the rationale for the ratings.

Dresser, John W., "Two Studies on the Social Function of Joking as an Outlet for Aggression," Ph.D. Dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1967.

Found, among other things, a very high correlation between joking and conversational skill.

Gibb, John D., "An Experimental Comparison of the Humorous Lecture and the Nonhumorous Lecture in Informative Speaking," M.A. Thesis, University of Utah, 1964.

Using a biology lecture based upon a standardized multiple-choice test of biology, this is the only extant study indicating that those who heard the humorous version learned more than the non-humorous version.

Goodchilds, Jacqueline D., "Effects of Being Witty on Position in the Social Structure of a Small Group," Sociometry, 22 (1959), 261-72.

"Sarcastic Wits" were judged from their written group-discussion protocols as "influential but not popular," whereas "Clowning Wits" were judged as "popular but not influential."

_____, and Ewart E. Smith, "The Wit and His Group," Human Relations, 17 (1964), 23-31.

Groups containing "deliberate wits" were more often correct in task-performance and persons in these groups were more satisfied with the group experience.

Gruner, Charles R., "Ad Hominem Satire as a Persuader: An Experiment," Journalism Quarterly, 48 (Spring, 1971), 128-31.

Either one or two Art Buchwald editorials satirizing Richard M. Nixon cannot be said to have altered Mr. Nixon's "image."

_____, "Art Hoppe Vs. Capital Punishment: An Experiemnt," ditto, paper presented at the Southern Speech Communication Association's convention, April 6, 1972, San Antonio.

A partial replication of the McGown thesis study (see below) with similar results; few subjects understood the thesis of the satire.

_____, "Art Hoppe vs. Martha Mitchell: A Further Experimental Study of Ad Hominem Editorial Satire as Persuasion," Satire Newsletter, in press.

An Art Hoppe satirical editorial alone is shown to have lowered ratings of Martha Mitchell's character and "sensibleness."

_____, "Editorial Satire as Persuasion: An Experiment," Journalism Quarterly, 44 (Winter, 1967), 727-30.

Two Art Buchwald columns were found to produce small but significant attitude shifts against two ridiculed concepts.

_____, "The Effect of Humor in Dull and Interesting Informative Speeches," Central States Speech Journal, 21 (Fall, 1970), 160-66.

Humor included in a dull and an interesting speech over the same content produced no noticeable improvement in information retention, but did enhance ratings of speaker "character," and, in the case of the "dull" speech, enhanced speaker "authoritativeness" ratings.

_____, "Effect of Humor on Speaker Ethos and Audience Information Gain," Journal of Communication, 17 (September, 1967), 228-33.

Including humor in a speech to inform on "listening" did not enhance learning of information therein nor ratings of speaker "authoritativeness," but did enhance ratings of speaker "character."

_____, "An Experimental Study of Ad Hominem Editorial Satire: Art Hoppe vs. Martha Mitchell," ditto, paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, December 29, 1971, San Francisco. In SCA Abstracts, 1971, pp. 59-60.

See Gruner item, Satire Newsletter, above.

_____, "An Experimental Study of Satire as Persuasion," Speech Monographs, 32 (June, 1965), 149-53.

Article based upon Gruner's dissertation.

_____, "An Experimental Study of the Effectiveness of Oral Satire in Modifying Attitude," Ph.D. Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1963.

A satiric speech opposing "censorship" was ineffective in changing attitudes, probably because most subjects failed to understand the serious thesis of the message.

_____, "A Further Experimental Study of Satire as Persuasion," Speech Monographs, 33 (June, 1966), 184-5.

Partial replication on the Gruner dissertation which showed that, when informed of the serious thesis of the satire, those neutral and mildly in favor of the satirized concept may be persuaded by satire.

_____, "Impact of Humor-Included in Dull and Interesting Speeches to Inform," mimeograph, paper presented at the Southern Speech Communication Association convention, April, 1970, Winston-Salem.

Study reported in more detail in Gruner, "The Effect of Speaker Ethos and Audience Information Gain of Humor in Dull and Interesting Speeches."

_____, "Research Report #84: Semantic Differential and Thurstone Measures of Attitude Toward Censorship," Central States Speech Journal, 17 (August, 1966), 179-80.

Presents data showing that the semantic differential scale bordered by "ridiculous" and "sensible" may be a valid measure of attitude change induced by satire.

_____, "Satire as a Reinforcer of Attitudes," ditto, paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, December 28, 1972, Chicago. In SCA Abstracts, 1972, p. 10.

Nixon supporters were more able to detect the thesis of an anti-McGovern satire than of an Anti-Nixon satire; the reverse did not hold true for McGovern supporters, however.

_____, and William E. Lampton, "Effects of Including Humorous Material in a Persuasive Sermon," Southern Speech Communication Journal, 38 (Winter, 1972), 188-96.

Humor added to a persuasive sermon failed to enhance the sermon's persuasiveness, but showed a tendency to increase the speaker's ethos.

Gutman, Jonathan and Robert F. Priest, "When is Aggression Funny?" Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 12 (1969), 60-65.

Subjects perceived jokes as less "aggressive" and more "humorous" when aggressor was perceived as "good" as opposed to "bad."

Kennedy, Allan J., "The Effect of Humor Upon Source Credibility," mimeograph, paper presented at the Speech Communication Association convention, December 28, 1972, Chicago. In SCA Abstracts, 1972, p. 10.

Reports two experiments in which inclusion of humor in speeches increased ratings of some aspects of speaker ethos, except in an audio-taped version.

_____, "An Experimental Study of the Effect of Humorous Message Content Upon Ethos and Persuasiveness," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1972.

Humor added to a speech advocating movie censorship had no persuasive effect; introducing the humorous version of the speech as humorous enhanced humor ratings of the speech.

_____, "An Experimental Study of the Effect of Humorous Message Content Upon Ethos and Persuasiveness," ditto, paper presented at the Speech Communication Association convention, December, 1970, New Orleans. In SCA Abstracts, 1970, p. 12.

Abstracted from Kennedy's dissertation.

Kilpela, Donald E., "An Experimental Study of the Effects of Humor on Persuasion," M.A. thesis, Wayne State University, 1961.

Addition of humor to a persuasive speech on state medicine had no persuasive effect.

Lampton, William E., "The Effect of Humor in a Persuasive Sermon," ditto, paper presented at the Speech Communication Association convention, December, 1971, San Francisco. In SCA Abstracts, 1971, p. 59.

This study is more explicitly detailed in the Gruner/Lampton article in SSCJ, above.

Lull, P.E., "The Effects of Humor in Persuasive Speeches," Speech Monographs, 7 (1940), 26-40.

Article based on Lull's dissertation.

_____, "An Objective Study of the Effectiveness of Humor in Persuasive Speech," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1940.

Found no persuasive effect from inclusion of humor in speeches for and against state medicine.

Markiewicz, Dorothy, "Can Humor Increase Persuasion, or is it All a Joke?", Mimeograph, paper presented at the Speech Communication convention, December 28, 1972, Chicago. In SCA Abstracts, 1972, p. 10.

Based upon the Markiewicz dissertation, below.

_____, "The Effects of Humor on Persuasion," Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1972.

Reports 7 separate experiments of humor and/or wit as communication which, taken together, show little or no communicative effect from the humorous stimuli.

McGown, MaryAnn, "An Experimental Study of the Persuasive Impact of a Satiric Editorial and That of a Comparable Direct Editorial," M.A. Thesis, University of Nebraska, 1968.

Neither an Art Hoppe satire of "capital punishment" nor a comparable "direct" editorial produced attitude change toward capital punishment.

Mettee, David R., Edward S. Hrelec, and Paul C. Wilkens, "Humor as an Interpersonal Asset and Liability," The Journal of Social Psychology, 85 (1971), 51-64.

Video-taped "professor" was rated more highly when using humor and introduced as "aloof," but was rated lower when using humor and introduced as "clownish."

Pokorny, Gary F., "An Experimental Study of the Impact of Satiric Material Included as Support in a Persuasive Speech," M.A. Thesis, University of Nebraska, 1965.

See entry below.

_____ and Charles R. Gruner, "An Experimental Study of the Effect of Satire Used as Support in a Persuasive Speech," Western Speech, 33 (Summer, 1969), 204-11.

A more sophisticated approach to the data from Pokorny's thesis (see item above) reveals that a straightforward speech against censorship was no more persuasive when a section satirically ridiculing censorship was added to it.

Priest, Robert F., "Election Jokes: the Effects of Reference Group Membership," Psychological Reports, 18 (1966), 600-2.

Political jokes may reinforce political bias; Republicans most enjoy anti-Democrat jokes; Democrats most enjoy anti-Republican jokes.

_____ and Joel Abrahams, "Candidate Preference and Hostile Humor in the 1968 Elections," Psychological Reports, 26 (1970), 779-83.

Similar in results to Priest, above.

Reid, John Kenneth, "The Effect of Humor on Perceived Attractiveness of a Speaker," M.A. Thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1971.

Study with small number of subjects found small and non-significant increments of speaker attractiveness ratings as humor amount was increased in video-taped individually-viewed speeches.

Smith, Ewart E. and Helen L. White, "Wit, Creativity, and Sarcasm," Journal of Applied Psychology, 49 (1965), 131-4.

Study using U.S. airmen in small groups found that "Wits were not effective leaders but were associated with less defensiveness and more effective group problem-solving. Most of the positive relationships with wit were found, more specifically, to be associated with sarcastic wit."

_____ and Jacqueline D. Goodchilds, "Characteristics of the Witty Group Member: The Wit as Leader," American Psychologist, 14 (1959), 375-6.

Corporation supervisory personnel participating in management development course who were judged to be "wits" were perceived as having strong personality profiles and leading in task- and group-maintenance behaviors.

_____, "The Wit in Large and Small Established Groups," Psychological Reports, 13 (1963), 273-4.

"Deliberate" wits in small (5-man) firemen groups seemed to have produced greater efficiency in problem-solving and more participant satisfaction in the group effort, although this did not hold true for large (10-man) firemen groups; in fact, for the larger groups, presence of a "deliberate" wit was accompanied by decreased problem-solving efficiency.

Taylor, Pat H., "The Relationship Between Humor and Retention," mimeograph, paper presented at the Speech Communication Association convention, December 28, 1972, Chicago. In SCA Abstracts, 1972, pp. 9-10.

Summarizes research on humor and retention, and is based mostly on Taylor's dissertation.

_____, "Research Report #51: The Effectiveness of Humor in Informative Speeches," Central States Speech Journal, 15 (November, 1964), 295-6.

High School students failed to learn more from a speech containing humor than from the same speech without the humor.

_____, "The Role of Listener-Defined Supportive Humor in Speeches of Information," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Indiana, 1971.

Humor included in one speech had no effect upon information retention, whereas humor included in another may have decreased retention.

Youngman, Robert C., "An Experimental Investigation of the Effect of Germane Humor Versus Non-germane Humor in an Informative Communication," Master's Thesis, Ohio University, 1966.

Addition of germane or non-germane humor to a speech produced no additional attitude change or learning, but the "germane" humor produced greater ratings of the speech's "worthwhileness" as compared to that with the non-germane humor.

Zeman, James V., "An Experimental Study of the Persuasive Effects of Satire in a Speech Presented to a High School Audience," M.A. Thesis, University of Nebraska, 1967.

Study patterned after the Gruner dissertation study using high school students as subjects failed to find any attitude change.